A Clare County Library Book Promotion

WORDS OF WAR

27th June 1918

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In Flanders Field

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

by John McCrae

Breakfast

We ate our breakfast lying on our backs,
Because the shells were screeching overhead.
I bet a rasher to a loaf of bread
That Hull United would beat Halifax
When Jimmy Staintorp played full-back instead
Of Billy Bradford. Ginger raised his head
And cursed, and took the bet; and dropt back dead.
We ate our breakfast lying on our backs,
Because the shells were screeching overhead.

by Wilfrid Gibson
Words of War

To mark the centenary in 2014 of the outbreak of World War One, this book promotion gathers together a selection of the best fiction and non-fiction titles that reflect the tragedy of The Great War. The promotion features fiction, poetry, memoir and history.

Many books – both fiction and non-fiction – were written by those with first-hand experience of life at the front describing both the horror and misery of the fighting but also the great loyalty and camaraderie among the men in the trenches. Some of these first-hand accounts are written as memoirs and some are fictionalised versions. A number of the novels are concerned more with the effect of the war on those left behind and the huge social changes caused by the conflict.

The two poetry anthologies included in this promotion contain poetry by the famous war poets such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon as well as writings by the less well known civilian poets.

The history books in the promotion vary from those which examine the causes and early days of the war to those that look at the conflict in its entirety.

100 years after the start of this war which resulted in millions of casualties and transformed society forever, these books will help readers gain a greater understanding of the conflict and the immense impact it had on Europe and on the world at large.

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by Wilfred Gibson
Regeneration
by Pat Barker

Army psychiatrist William Rivers is treating shell-shocked soldiers in a hospital in Scotland in 1917. Rivers’ job is to make the men in his charge healthy enough to fight. Yet the closer he gets to mending his patients’ minds, the harder every decision becomes to send them back to the horrors of the front. Barker’s book explores how the traumas of war brutalised a generation of young men.

A Long Long Way
by Sebastian Barry
Faber and Faber 2006 / First published in 2005

Willie Dunne leaves his native Dublin in 1914 to join the Allies on the Western Front. Caught between the catastrophic violence he encounters there and the growing political tension at home over Irish independence, Willie finds himself confronting unbearable choices regarding family, patriotism, and the devotion he feels toward his regiment. This is a novel about the terrible realities of war and the divided loyalties that many Irish soldiers felt during the First World War.

Birdsong
by Sebastian Faulks
Vintage 1994 / First published in 1993

Stephen Wraysford, a young Englishman, arrives in Amiens in northern France in 1910 to stay with the Azaire family and falls in love with the unhappily married Isabelle. With the world on the brink of war the relationship falters and Stephen volunteers to fight on the Western Front. His love for Isabelle forever engraved on his heart, he experiences not only the unprecedented horrors of that conflict but also the intense camaraderie among the men in the trenches.

Other Adult Book Promotions
by Clare County Library

Novel Destinations
Down Through the Pages
Crime in a Cold Climate
Around the World in 22 Books
Eureka
Wonderfully Wild
Blúirín Gaeilge
The Modern Library
Contemporary Irish Fiction
Dads ‘n’ Lads
Regeneration
by Pat Barker

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Parade’s End
by Ford Madox Ford
BBC Books 2012 / First published in 1928

Christopher Tietjens, an officer and gentleman, leaves the secure orderly world of Edwardian England for the chaotic madness of the First World War, a war that rocks the very foundations of English society. Against the backdrop of the war, Tietjens finds himself torn between his unfaithful socialite wife, Sylvia, and his suffragette mistress, Valentine. At the novel’s centre is the psychological result of the war on the participants and on society as a whole.

The Good Soldier Švejk
by Jaroslav Hašek

Švejk from Prague joins the Austrian army and manages to constantly frustrate the officers with his incompetence and idiocy. If his incompetence is real or acted is not clear, and it ends with Švejk being mistakenly taken prisoner by his own troops while wearing a Russian uniform. With a series of absurdly comic episodes, this novel explores the pointlessness and futility of war.

A Farewell to Arms
by Ernest Hemingway
Vintage 2013 / First published in 1929

An American ambulance driver wounded on the Italian front falls in love with a beautiful English nurse. Set against the looming horrors of the battlefield, this semi autobiographical work captures the harsh realities of war and the pain of lovers caught in its inexorable sweep.
Return of the Soldier
by Rebecca West
Virago Press 2010 / First published in 1918

Chris Baldry, a shell-shocked captain suffering from amnesia, returns home from war to the three women who have helped shape his life. Margaret a poor innkeeper’s daughter he loved fifteen years before, a favourite cousin he remembers only as a childhood friend and a wife he doesn’t even remember. The women have to choose between leaving Chris to languish in a safe, dreamy past or to help him recover his memory so that he can return to the front.

All Quiet on the Western Front
by Erich Maria Remarque
Vintage 1996 / First published in 1929

Paul Baumer enlists with his classmates in the German army of World War I. But despite what they have learned in their training, they break into pieces under the first bombardment in the trenches. Through years of vivid horror, Paul holds fast to a single vow - if he comes out of the war alive - to fight against the principles of hate that meaninglessly pits young men of the same generation but different uniforms against each other.

The First World War
by Hew Strachan
Simon & Schuster 2014 / First published in 2003

Strachan argues that the First World War was a truly global conflict from the start, with many of the most decisive battles fought in or directly affecting the Balkans, Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. It re-creates this world-altering conflict both on and off the battlefield—the clash of ideologies between the colonial powers at the centre of the war, the social and economic unrest that swept Europe both before and after, the military strategies employed in the various theatres of war, the terms of peace and why it didn’t last.

My Dear, I Wanted to Tell You
by Siegfried Sassoon
Faber and Faber 1965 / First published in 1930

Siegfried Sassoon’s brutal experiences in the trenches of the Great War led to shell-shock sending him to a war letter. A medical board decides not to prosecute, questioning of the war leads him to write a public anti-war on those who fight and those who don’t and a poignant testament to the power of enduring love.

1914-1918: the History of the First World War
by David Stevenson
Penguin Books 2012 / First published in 2004

This political, strategic and military analysis covers the world’s most devastating cataclysm in full; from when a century of peace was shattered in the summer of 1914, through the escalation of the slaughter to when the guns fell silent on the Western Front. Stevenson re-examines the causes, course and impact of this ‘war to end war’ from an international perspective, placing it in the context of its era and exposing its underlying dynamics.

Her Privates We
by Frederic Manning
Serpent’s Tail 2013 / First published in 1929

This novel tells the story of the Battle of the Somme from the perspective of Bourne, an ordinary private. Concerned less with battle, it focuses more on the humdrum routine of a soldier’s life as officers devise ways to keep soldiers occupied between marching and fighting. Manning refuses to idealise military life and romanticise the war, instead presenting a raw and shockingly honest portrait of men engaged in war amid all its boredom, misery and horror.

The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War
edited by Hew Strachan
Oxford University Press 2014 / First published in 1998

This book brings together in one volume many of the most distinguished historians of the conflict in an account that matches the scale of the events. From its causes to its consequences, from the Western Front to the Eastern, from the strategy of the politicians to the tactics of the generals, they chart the course of the war and assess its profound political and human consequences.
The Clare War Dead: a history of the casualties of the Great War
by Tom Burnell
The History Press Ireland 2011

This book provides a detailed listing of the men from County Clare who died during the Great War, combined with intricate data and previously unpublished correspondence and photographs. It was undertaken to honour those who died in service and to shine a light on an aspect of Irish history which has for too long gone unexamined and unrecognized.

Catastrophe: Europe Goes to War 1914
by Max Hastings
William Collins 2014

Catastrophe re-creates this dramatic year, from the diplomatic crisis to the fighting in Belgium and France on the western front and Serbia and Galicia to the east. Detailing the lead-up to and the opening months of the First World War, Hastings seeks to explain both how the conflict came about and what befell millions of ordinary men and women during the first months of strife.

The First World War
by John Keegan
The Bodley Head 2014 / First published in 1998

Keegan’s account begins with the doomed diplomatic efforts behind the scenes to avert the catastrophe of WW1. He portrays the unfolding military conflict on land, sea and in the air as it extended over the whole of Europe and brings to life the nightmarish engagements of Verdun, the Somme and Gallipoli. But central to the book too is the human aspect and the devastation extended over the entirety of Europe, which profoundly informs the politics and culture of the continent today.

My Dear, I Wanted to Tell You
by Louisa Young
Harper 2012 / First published in 2011

Young’s book follows two soldiers fighting for their country, their survival and their sanity in the trenches of Flanders, and the women left behind who cope with their absence in very different ways. Moving among Ypres, London and Paris, the novel is both an exploration of the lasting effects of war on those who fight and those who don’t and a poignant testament to the power of enduring love.

Memoirs of an Infantry Officer
by Siegfried Sassoon
Faber and Faber 1965 / First published in 1930

After being wounded by a bullet through the lung, George Sherston returns home to convalesce, where his questioning of the war leads him to write a public anti-war letter. A medical board decides not to prosecute, but instead deems him to be suffering from shell-shock sending him to a hospital for treatment. This book is a fictionalized autobiography of poet Siegfried Sassoon’s brutal experiences in the trenches of The Great War.
Poetry of the First World War: an anthology
edited by Tim Kendall
Oxford University Press 2013

Selections from the celebrated soldier-poets as well as less well-known writing by civilian and women poets are incorporated in this new anthology. The work of each poet is prefaced with a biographical account that sets the poems in their historical context. Music hall and trench songs provide a further lyrical perspective on the War.

The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry
edited by George Walter
Penguin Group 2006

This anthology reflects the diverse experience of those who lived through the war - bringing together the words of poets, soldiers and civilians affected by the conflict. The collection has been arranged thematically, moving through the war’s different stages from conscription to its aftermath, to offer the reader a variety of perspectives on the same common experiences.

Testament of Youth
by Vera Brittain
Virago Press 2004 / First published in 1933

Vera Brittain was preparing to study at Oxford when war was declared. Four years later her life and the life of her whole generation had changed in a way that was unimaginable in the tranquil pre-war era. This is Brittain’s account of how she survived the period; how she lost the man she loved; how she nursed the wounded and how she emerged into an altered world.

Goodbye to All That
by Robert Graves
Penguin Books 2000 / First published in 1929

In this memoir Graves traces his life from early childhood through the brutal war and the post-war years of the early 1920s. He depicts the horrors and disillusionment of the Great War, life in the trenches and the horrendous waste of lives, tracing the monumental and universal loss of innocence that occurred as a result of the First World War.

Storm of Steel
by Ernst Jünger
Penguin Group 1961 / First published in 1920

Presenting the desperate conflict of the First World War through the eyes of an ordinary German soldier, this book depicts Jünger’s experience of combat on the front line - leading raiding parties, defending trenches against murderous British incursions, and simply enduring the shells that tore his comrades apart. It illuminates not only the horrors but also the fascination of a war that kept men fighting for four long years.